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ABSTRACT

This monograph presents ideas for initiating and/or improving parent education programs. The first of eight sections examines the history of California's parent education since its beginning in 1926. Section 2 discusses developing a parent education philosophy; activities suitable for parent education programs are suggested. Section 3 provides guidelines for program development. Development includes determining community needs, putting the program into action, and establishing parent education classes. Various types of parent education classes are described. The fourth section examines the advantages of schools and/or other locations for the class site selection. Section 5 lists basic equipment needed for childbirth education or preschool education classes. Section 6 considers the selection of teachers, qualities of effective teachers, the use of teacher aides, and involvement of students. Section 7 suggests instructional unit titles which can be used in organizing the curriculum. The final section discusses working with schools for future planning. (CSS)

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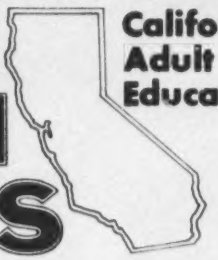
ESTABLISHING PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAMS



California Adult Education

A LEADERSHIP MONOGRAPH

CE 021 717

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See page 18 for additional information about Department of Education publications.

Preface

In California parent education programs were first established by the State Department of Education in 1926. Since that time, adult education has helped to provide needed support and growth opportunities to many California families.

At no time has the need been as critical as it is today for a broad range of programs that meet the needs of all families in the community. It has been stated that, in our world of rapid change, the family as the basic unit of society is deteriorating, as evidenced by the alarming increase in divorces and broken homes, the increase in child neglect and abuse, and the increase in the number of crimes in our country.

Most parents have no background for child rearing except their own childhood experiences, which may be a help or a hindrance. While a great deal has been written about parenting, parents often do not have access to these available written materials, or they are confused by conflicting points of view that make it difficult for them to develop their own methods of rearing their children in keeping with their values.

The Adult and Community Education Division of the California State Department of Education recognizes the importance of parent education classes as a part of a strong adult education program. Effective parent education programs have been developed in those adult schools that have a strong commitment to helping families in the communities they serve. These adult schools have provided the necessary support in staff, equipment, and facilities to make the classes successful. This monograph has been prepared to present ideas for improving parent education programs, and it should assist educators who wish to begin a program or improve one that is ongoing. Advice has been sought from practitioners in the field. Particular recognition should be given to Mary Ann Suggs and Vicki Brown, who assumed the major responsibility for organizing and preparing the manuscript.

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I. Examining the History of Parent Education

Since the early parent education classes in 1926, parent education programs have expanded and changed to meet the needs of families. The beginning of the Head Start program in 1965 focused public attention upon the importance of the preschool years as an optimum learning time for young children. Only a small percentage of preschool children, however, were served by Head Start. Other families not served by the Head Start program became concerned about providing their children with a preschool experience, and consequently many nursery schools were started in communities throughout California. In fact, California led the nation in the number of preschool programs. However, many parents were not able to afford the tuition for nursery school, and still others chose the preschool parent-child participation classes offered in adult education programs because of a desire to be involved in their children's education. The effectiveness of a preschool experience for children can be greatly enhanced when parents are involved in the program and are able to carry over the activities into the home. Parents grow in their ability to relate to their children and guide their development if parent education programs meet their objectives.

Parents want to do what is best for their children, but the changes in our society have made the parents uncertain about their own abilities. Without the help of parents or older family members to guide them through the difficult years of parenting, children need other support systems. However, most parents have had very little experience or educational preparation for this important role. One of the benefits of parent education programs is the increased self-confidence that the participants gain. Schools often find that this increase in self-confidence makes these parents more effective in their involvement with the educational program, and consequently children benefit as parents become more effective role models.

The beginning of early childhood education programs in California brought about another increase in concern for parent education. The task force report on early childhood education in 1972 stated:

> Because we recognize the importance of parents in the education of their children, we strongly affirm that parent education and involvement must be an integral part of all programs. Parents should be included in both the planning and evaluation of individualized instruction for their children. . . .[1]
>
> Parent education programs or classes should be considered from several viewpoints, among them developing of training programs *with* and not just *for* parents and providing enabling and enriching 'learning together' experiences for the family. Another component of the parent program should be parent education that includes the child when he is very young, perhaps at a developmental age of three or even younger.[2]

The original recommendation of the task force was that the Early Childhood Education program begin with children at four years of age. This provision was later taken out of the legislation, but schools were encouraged to provide for articulation of the Early Childhood Education program with preschool programs. Parent education and parent involvement in schools became required components of the school plan.

In a 1976 publication, *Partners in Education: Adult Education/Early Childhood Education Through Parent Education,* the State Department of Education urged adult schools to work with early childhood education schools in planning parent education programs. They defined parent education as "... a continuing educational program and process which (1) focuses upon parental skills and understandings particularly related to understanding growth and development in the early childhood years; and (2) reinforces the concept of cooperative responsibility for the learning process between home, school, and community."[3]

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[1] *Early Childhood Education: Report of the Task Force on Early Childhood Education,* Sacramento: California State Department of Education, 1972, p. 4.

[2] *Ibid.,* p. 13.

[3] *Partners in Education: Adult Education/Early Childhood Education Through Parent Education,* Sacramento: California State Department of Education, 1976, p. 3.

Other changes in society that have brought about modifications in parent education programs include an increased awareness of the acculturation needs of non-English-speaking families, or limited-English-speaking families; concern for the needs of single-parent families; and an apparent need for closer cooperation between all levels of our educational programs.

In one California school district, a program that combines English as a second language and parent education programs has been in operation since 1970. Other adult education schools are now establishing such programs. Adult education schools throughout the state are attempting to meet the needs of single parents through evening discussion groups and Saturday parent-child participation classes. In several adult schools, classes are operated in cooperation with the high school child-care training program, with high school students regularly involved in parent education classes as a part of their training.

Parent education programs in adult education today must be planned to be effective and to meet the needs of the community they serve. Such planning involves the following:

- Determining community needs
- Selecting sites that are convenient for parents
- Involving parents in the planning process
- Developing a flexible curriculum
- Selecting teachers who understand the community
- Demonstrating a willingness to grow and change

II. Developing a Philosophy of Parent Education

Parent education programs are based upon the belief that parents are the most influential teachers in the lives of children. The task of parenthood is perhaps the most significant one in the life of a person; however, little attention has been given in our culture for preparing people for this crucial role of parenthood. A sound parent education program should provide parents with the knowledge and understanding needed to function most effectively in society and also with encouragement and support needed to develop a belief in their own ability to make wise choices for their families.

In their book on parent education, Pickart and Fargo point out the importance of helping parents see themselves as teachers.[1]

Activities for parent education programs include, but are not limited to, opportunities for parents to do the following:

1. Understand the key role of parents as the primary teachers of the child.
2. Develop confidence in their abilities as parents.
3. Develop skills in child guidance, family communications, and problem solving.
4. Acquire an understanding of the concepts of growth and development, which will help parents determine realistic expectations for their children.
5. Recognize the importance of the parent as an integral part of the educational process in the school.
6. Identify and make use of community resources for the enrichment of family life.
7. Interrelate with other parents who have the same family problems for mutual support. (The parents of preschool children are otherwise very isolated in their role as parents unless they have an extended family group in their community.)

[1] Evelyn Pickart and Jean Fargo, *Parent Education*, New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1971.

III. Developing Parent Education Programs

At the present time in California many parent education programs include classes for expectant parents, parents of infants and toddlers, parents of preschool children, and parents of school-age children. These classes are organized in a variety of ways, and an understanding of the possibilities provided by each type of class is needed to determine the types of classes best suited to a particular community.

Each parent education program will develop its own personality and character based on the parents and the community being served, on the subject interests, and on the commitment from the coordinator and teachers. For example, some programs are established as a complete unit that includes a coordinator, teachers, instructional aides, and clerical staff. This staff has responsibilities only to that particular program; i.e., finances, curriculum, publicity, recruitment, evaluation, and so forth. However, other programs are integrated with other general adult school classes, and the responsibilities for these classes are divided among several people.

The type of program established also depends upon the size of the community and the adult school, a.d.a. for the year, and the philosophy of the community education director. The classroom atmosphere and class content must be geared to parents who are in the student role, not to students who are in the parent role. Parents enjoy the informality, flexibility, variety, and learning at their level of understanding. Parents want to be involved and to be able to apply what they are learning directly to their family situation.

Determining Community Needs

No one model parent education program will meet the needs of all communities. The local adult school must work with parent-oriented groups and agencies in determining community needs. A basic needs assessment process should be accomplished before a program is established. This process can then be incorporated into the program as an on-going process to facilitate adjustments as needs change throughout the years. Also, a program should include a parent education advisory council comprised of relative community representatives and parents.

Needs assessment information can be obtained from the following areas:

- *Medical community*–(1) Local health department personnel, such as the health educator, public health nurses, crippled children service workers, mental health clinics, well-baby clinics; (2) pediatricians; (3) obstetricians; (4) family physicians; and (5) hospitals that provide maternity and pediatric care.
- *Social services community*–(1) Local department of social services personnel, such as child protection workers, community program developers, and eligibility workers; (2) nearest Children's Home Society; (3) local counseling centers; (4) licensed marriage and family counselors and psychiatrists; (5) nearest regional Loma Prieta agency; (6) nearest child abuse organization; and (7) nearest Planned Parenthood agency.
- *School community*–(1) Local parent-teacher organizations or associations; (2) elementary and high school principals, counselors, and teachers; (3) school advisory committees or site councils; (4) parent-school groups of "special" children; i.e., TMR, EMR, and so forth; (5) parent advisory councils of state or federally funded programs; (6) school nurses; (7) local school boards; and (8) parents of local preschool programs, day care centers, and so forth.
- *Community organizations*–(1) Junior League, League of Women Voters, AAUW, and other women's groups that may have committees working in the area of parent education; (2) YMCA or YWCA; (3) city recreation department; (4) chamber of commerce, which may have an education and/or health committee; (5) local Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts organizations; (6) church youth groups; and (7) local childbirth education groups.

The collections of the information can be accomplished in a number of different ways, depending upon the amount of time, the information being sought, and the group from which the information is being obtained. Several ideas that can be used, depending upon finances and time, are the following:

1. Survey form, with cover letter explaining the purpose and intent of the program, mailed to groups and individuals with return addressed and stamped envelopes included
2. Survey form to be completed during a meeting
3. Survey form sent home from school with children or mailed out
4. Survey form attached to community newsletters; i.e., Junior League, child abuse, Planned Parenthood, and so forth
5. Meetings with parents during school open house or back-to-school night
6. Special community meeting or a presentation at different group meetings
7. Information obtained from surveys and meetings to include some statistics of the community's composition, such as parent population; children population; number of births per year; number of preschool programs and day care centers; ethnic population breakdown of groups; number of interested schools; and so forth. The surveys also must include some class information, such as subject content; cost; day or evening preference; length and time; facility; child care; transportation; and so forth.

Putting a Program into Action

A few ideas that existing programs have used to promote parent education in the adult school environment are the following:

- *Parents' volunteer involvement*–(1) Assist coordinator in interviewing prospective teachers; (2) provide information and talent for preparing the program newsletter; (3) offer support to other parents; i.e., breastfeeding concerns, cesarean delivery, sick child, loss of child, handicapped child, and other crisis oriented situations; (4) establish cooperative babysitting services; (5) assist with child care service during class time; (6) organize and participate in small interest groups; i.e., parents of a cesarean child, parents of twins, single parents, parents of handicapped children; and (7) provide written and verbal feedback to individual instructor and/or coordinator as part of the on-going evaluation process.
- *Educating the community*–(1) Speaking engagements with slide presentation describing the over-all program; (2) speaking engagements on specific subjects within the program; (3) parenting film showings; (4) booths and demonstrations at community health fairs, school fairs, and so forth; (5) program descriptive brochures in offices and agencies; i.e., physicians, hospitals, public health nurses, public libraries, family planning clinics, probation departments, counseling centers, and local schools; (6) conduct in-service education classes for other agencies; i.e., emergency childbirth for the firemen, single parent issues for social workers, childbirth education for student nurses, preparing high school students for future parenthood; and (7) meeting periodically with medical community; i.e., attend OB/GYN and pediatricians staff meetings at local hospitals, meet with hospital nurses, and meet with other medical groups.
- *Publicity*–The key promotors of the program are the students, who publicize the program through word of mouth. Other publicity ideas are newspaper articles (free class announcements, feature articles, paid advertizing); radio/TV spot public service announcements; posters displayed in business windows or libraries; and already existing newsletters and organizations (elementary PTA news, church bulletins, Child Abuse Council, Planned Parenthood, Junior League, and other organizations that have a regular mailing and/or that develop a newsletter specifically for students in parent education programs.

Establishing Parent Education Classes

When a class in parent education is set up, some pertinent factors must be considered: teacher recruitment and qualifications, cost, classroom setting, course outline, publicity, and evaluation.

Expectant Parent Classes

Expectant parent classes provide opportunities for expectant parents to discuss their pregnancies, learn practical skills in preparation for their future birth experiences, learn care of newborn babies, and learn about parenting. These classes can be planned according to trimester of pregnancy, such as growing times for three to six months and delivery times for six to nine months.

Parent Observation Classes

Parent observation classes are most often planned for parents of infants or preschool children. In these classes, the parents observe their children and keep written records of their children's experiences, as well as participate in discussions and assist as teachers in the preschool program. The parents attend with the children, and the class meets for two hours one morning a week. Parents learn to view their children more objectively in this classroom setting, and they usually discover that their children's behavior, which had been a concern to them, is very typical of children at their child's age level. Classroom observations are also used as a basis for the parent discussions. An aide or assistant teacher often works with the children during the parent discussion part of the class sessions.

Parent-Child Participation Classes

Parent-child participation classes also involve both a parent and the child. These classes focus upon the role of parents as teachers, and parents work directly with children in a classroom under the guidance of a teacher skilled in working with both parents and children. A specified period of time each week is spent in parent discussion. These classes may be scheduled to meet for one, two, three, four, or five days weekly; and the amount of parent participation varies. In some programs, each parent attends each session with his or her child. In other programs, the child attends class sessions two days weekly and the parent, one; or the child may attend three days, while a parent attends two of those days. In some programs parents are also required to attend an evening session monthly or weekly. Since state apportionment can be claimed only for the registered adults in attendance at each session, the amount of parent participation required will depend in part upon the student-teacher ratio required by the adult school. In parent-child classes, maintaining the same ratio as in other classes is usually not possible because a class of 20 adults would mean 20 adults and 20 or more children, because many parents bring more than one child to a class. Most facilities are inadequate for such large groups, and it is questionable if a quality program for parents and children can be maintained with such large numbers. Adult schools with a real commitment to parent education have recognized the need to lower the student-teacher ratio for these classes.

Although it is beneficial for parents to be involved in the preschool educational program for their children, most parents are also concerned, particularly as their children near kindergarten age, that the children have some experience away from them. This concern has made particularly popular the classes that require parents to attend only part of the time.

Parent Participation Nursery Schools

In some areas adult schools have worked with groups of parents in setting up parent-participation nursery schools. The adult school is usually responsible for providing the teacher-director and paying his or her salary. However, the parents assume the responsibility for other aspects of the program. Parents work together in planning the program along with the teacher, supervising the educational program, purchasing materials, and maintaining the physical plant. In some areas the adult school has provided a location for holding the classes, and parents may be expected to pay a tuition that covers the cost of materials and supplies.

Parent Discussion Classes

Parent discussion classes provide opportunities for parents to discuss problems of mutual concern and to extend their knowledge and understanding of parenting. Children are not a part of these classes, although providing for child care is often necessary. These classes can be planned for parents of children in a particular age group (such as adolescents), or they can be planned to meet the needs of all parents at a particular site (such as at a school). These classes are often set up to serve the needs of certain groups (such as the parents in a Title I program) and are scheduled for varying lengths of time. A class may be scheduled for the semester or for as short a time as four class sessions. Parent discussion classes may be organized to cover a wide variety of topics from nutrition to discipline, or a class might be set up to explore one particular topic, such as "Helping Children Develop Feelings of Self-Esteem."

In many Early Childhood Education schools, adults schools have helped to provide parent education programs through parent discussion groups. Special interest discussions can be planned as a part of school events, such as back-to-school night, with parents meeting in groups at each grade level to discuss characteristics of children in that age group.

Lecture Series

A lecture series is a good way of supplementing the regular parent education program and bringing to the community a variety of speakers in the field of parent education. A lecture series must consist

of four meetings, and apportionment can be claimed only for those participants who attend two sessions. Some schools have contracted with one speaker for a series on a particular topic, while others have presented several speakers. It is sometimes desirable to have one outstanding key speaker who will tend to draw a crowd and then to follow this with local speakers whose fees will be less. In southern California, several districts have had very successful lecture series by jointly sponsoring a series with a chapter of the Southern California Association for the Education of Young Children. The adult school worked with the association in selecting speakers and selecting a location for the lectures. The local adult school paid all, or part of, the speakers' fees and then collected apportionment funds. The association made the information available to all of their members and preschools in the area. The lecture series was open to the public, and the adult school assumed the responsibility for publicity in the community. In one adult school, parents who registered for parent education classes were given tickets to the lecture series.

Classes for Parents of the Handicapped

Any of the types of classes discussed could be organized to meet the special needs of parents of the handicapped. (Some school districts have combined infant and young children stimulation programs with evening parent discussion classes.) As school districts become involved in implementing the federal legislation for the handicapped, PL 94-142, adult schools personnel should work with special education program personnel in providing parent education as needs are identified. Also, existing preschool parent-child classes can assist in the Search and Serve process, as districts seek to identify handicapped preschool children.

Court Mandated Classes

The Los Angeles Unified School District works with the courts and the Los Angeles Probation Department to provide parental guidance classes for parents who have been mandated by the courts to attend such classes and for other interested parents. The parental guidance classes consist of ten sessions, and enrollment is open so that parents can enter at any time. A certificate of completion is given at the end of the course. Classes are planned to provide a supportive, nonpunitive experience for the parents who enroll. The classes are designed primarily for parents of adolescents, but all parents may attend. Other classes may be required for parents of young children and coordinated with the courts, protective service workers, and local child abuse councils.

In some districts such programs have been set up in cooperation with the local police department, sheriff's station juvenile division officers, or probation officers at the municipal court.

IV. Selecting Class Sites

It is particularly important in lower socio-economic areas to select sites for parent education classes that are within walking distances of the homes of the families to be served. Such a location is most likely to be an elementary school, but a church, a community center, or even an old house that has been declared safe for such use *or* that meets all of the necessary building code requirements might be available.

During the years when school enrollments were growing all over the state, the only available space in an elementary school was usually a school cafetorium, and many parent education classes have been operated successfully in such locations even though they were less than desirable. With declining enrollments in many school districts today, schools often have empty classrooms that make ideal locations for parent education classes. The adult school staff should request such space as it becomes available.

Fitting the type of class, parents' needs, and availability of facility together is essential in selecting appropriate sites. For instance, availability of a playground and toilet facilities must be considered when choosing a site for classes that involve young children. Therefore, many districts have found it feasible to lease church-school classrooms. On the other hand, high school classrooms are often available for evening use. The use of the high school facilities offers geographic variety or one location to be identified as a parent education evening center. These are the facility requirements for day nurseries, according to the California Administrative Code, Title 22, unless the parents are going to be on the premises at all times.

Advantages of School Locations

When space is available, a school location is often the best choice for classes because such a location is within walking distances of a family neighborhood and can provide for continuity between the child's preschool experience and kindergarten, continuity between parents' and teachers' relationship, and use of buildings that would otherwise be empty. Some equipment such as chairs and tables may also be available at a school site, and parents tend to feel that programs offered at school locations have greater value.

Advantages of Other Locations

Just as using the school site for location of classes gives the parent education program credibility in some areas, in other areas it creates a barrier. For some parents, schools have not been friendly places, and, therefore, some parents hesitate to enroll in programs at a school. They may feel more at ease in a house that has been rented by the adult school. Such a house offers the advantages of a homier atmosphere, a kitchen table for coffee, and better arrangement for a discussion group. In one California adult school, a location of identified need for parent education classes was not within walking distance of an elementary school. In addition, no churches were located within the area nor houses for rent, so the adult school sent two school buses into the area and had them parked at a home. One bus was used as a classroom for English as a second language (ESL) for adults and the other one as a playroom for the children.

V. Identifying Equipment for Classes

Basic Needs for Childbirth Education Classes

The basic equipment needs for a childbirth education class are a large carpeted room, chalkboard, instructional charts, and audiovisual aids, as such equipment pertains to the class format. Many of the instructional charts can be made by the instructor. Audiovisual equipment and films can be obtained from the office of the county superintendent of schools on a loan basis. Instructors can obtain free materials and samples from pharmaceutical sales representatives, representing formula companies, disposable diaper companies, and so forth. Free materials can also be obtained from local physicians and clinics.

The International Childbirth Education Association has published a *Teachers' Guide* and a *Parents' Guide* that provide detailed information for establishing classes. The basic needs for childbirth teaching should include the following:

1. Books on pregnancy, birth, and parenting (can be obtained from public library and parent donations)
2. Birth Atlas charts from the Maternity Center Association (cost of $15)
3. Relationship of Growing Uterus charts from the Maternity Center Association (cost of $5); charts colored and laminated by instructor
4. Pelvic floor muscles charts, hand drawn on poster board and covered with clear contact paper
5. X-ray and ultrasound pictures from local radiologist's office; office may donate small x-ray viewer
6. Birth control kit, samples of all methods put together by local planned parenthood or family planning clinic or individual samples from different clinics, physicians, and pharmaceutical sales representatives
7. Nutrition charts, food group pictures on poster boards and covered with clear contact paper
8. Pamphlets from pharmaceutical companies
9. Prepared childbirth film or slides
10. Organized hospital tour of maternity floor
11. Bathing equipment, assembled by instructor; donated by local baby stores
12. Hospital samples including mother-child ID bands, cord clamps, plastibells, suction bulbs, disposable diapers

Basic Needs for Preschool Education Classes

Parent education classes for preschool children and their parents do require some special equipment. The initial outlay, however, need not be great; and there are some advantages besides cost savings in having parents help construct needed equipment. One of the goals of parent education classes is to help parents learn to select for their children play equipment that will stimulate learning. The most appropriate materials for this purpose are often those items that parents can make at home. The parent education teacher helps parents make equipment from scraps, discards, or other inexpensive materials. It is a valuable experience for parents to learn to construct inexpensive toys and equipment. On the other hand, planning a quality preschool program is impossible without an adequate amount of equipment and supplies.

The basic needs for a classroom for preschool children should include the following:

1. Small tables and chairs
2. Books and records (can be obtained from a library until a supply is built up)
3. A record player
4. Wheeled toys, such as tricycles and wagons (can be purchased inexpensively at a swap meet)
5. Sand toys (can be constructed from discards)
6. Easels for painting
7. A set of unit blocks and accessories (such as trucks, cars, and planes)
8. Dolls and some housekeeping furniture
9. Art material, such as paper, paste, paints, glue, and so forth

When equipment is purchased, it should be sturdy enough to withstand group use. A basic

supply of well made equipment is preferable to a large amount of flimsy materials.

Involvement of Parents

Parents should be involved in decisions regarding the selection of materials. Participation in the selection of materials can be a valuable learning experience as parents read about the selection of equipment, discuss the equipment required to meet the needs of children at a particular age level, and weigh the merits and the cost of various items. Parents will also feel more of a commitment to a program they have helped to build. They may bring discarded kitchen items for the sand box or housekeeping corner, help paint or refinish toys, decorate the classroom, and construct toys and games.

VI. Selecting Teachers

Teachers for parent education courses can be individuals with a Standard Elementary credential, Standard Secondary credential, or Adult Designated Subjects credential. The Adult Designated Subjects credential can be obtained through a combination of work experience in the subject area to be taught and formal education totaling five years. Teachers must have a background of experience and training in the subject they are teaching; i.e., personal childbirth experience, maternity nursing, pediatric nursing, early childhood education, or nursery school experience. One of the best sources of teachers for parent education classes is parents from these classes who also have a credential or some early childhood education, health education, or medical background.

Many community colleges now offer AA degrees in early childhood education, and early childhood education programs are a good source of teachers. In smaller communities without such resources, it is often possible to find former teachers who have young children at home and who are anxious to work a few hours each week in an adult school.

Qualities of Effective Teachers

An effective teacher is one who is flexible and accepting of all adults and children. A cheerful, positive attitude on the part of the teacher helps to set the tone for the classroom. The teacher must have a good background of knowledge in the subject matter to be taught and the ability to deal with the intense emotions that are often generated in parent discussions. The childbirth education teacher must be one who has understanding and empathy for pregnant parents. However, the parent education teacher must be one who has an understanding of young children and the ability to relate to them on their level. Both types of teachers must be sensitive to the needs of their students and must plan a program for them with those needs in mind. The teacher must be able to relate well to parents as well as to children and be able to guide meaningful discussions that will meet the parents' needs.

Meetings and Inservice Training

Once a parent education program has been established that involves two or more teachers, regular staff meetings should be held to provide opportunities for sharing materials, discussing topics, and planning for activities that will supplement and strengthen the total parent education program. Inservice training sessions should be planned for the district staff in a large district, and small districts should join together to share resources.

In 1975 a southern California group called the Parent Education Coordinators of Los Angeles County was formed to share information and gain recognition and support for parent education programs. This organization wrote a position paper on parent education, contacted legislators, and planned publicity that would focus attention on the need for parent education and on the special problems faced by programs serving both adults and children.

Use of Teacher Aides

Many parent education programs provide trained aides to assist the teachers in setting up the classroom and supervising the preschool program. The aide is also responsible for supervising the children during the parent discussion time. While this is highly desirable, program directors who have not considered it financially feasible have worked out schedules that make it possible for parents to rotate the responsibility for supervising the children during the discussion time.

In parent discussion classes, an aide is needed to care for children during the class time, since parents spend all of the session in discussion and few parents can make arrangements for child care.

Involvement of Students

Students from high school and community college child development classes can be scheduled to participate on a rotational basis during the parent participation sessions. They participate first

in the discussion session and then later with the children in the classroom. This arrangement makes possible the providing of added supervision during discussion time, and students benefit by being involved in the planning and supervision of the preschool program. Also, this experience gives students a better understanding of the concerns and needs of parents as well.

In some school districts, parent education classes have been located on high school campuses to make it possible for more students to observe or participate. This kind of cooperative effort between different levels of the educational program becomes increasingly important as attempts are made to gain maximum benefits from tax dollars.

VII. Organizing the Curriculum

The curriculum for an expectant parent class will generally be organized for the discussion type of class that might include the following units of instructions:

1. Fetal development
2. Nutritional needs
3. Body changes during pregnancy
4. Emotions during pregnancy
5. Prenatal/postnatal exercises
6. Relaxation and breathing techniques
7. Physiology of labor and delivery
8. Alternatives of labor and delivery
9. Infant feeding and nutrition
10. Characteristics of the newborn
11. Postdelivery and parenting adjustments
12. Hospital tour
13. Infant care
14. Family planning
15. Medical care for the baby

A class might well be structured around the time of the pregnancy, such as each of the trimesters of pregnancy. In classes planned for a particular group of parents, such as parents of cesarean delivered children, the same topics will be explored but with emphasis upon the cesarean birth experience.

The curriculum for a parent education class will vary with the type of class being offered. In discussion classes, units of instruction might include the following:

1. Child growth and development
2. Physical development
3. Meeting emotional needs of children
4. Meeting social needs of children
5. Planning for cognitive growth of children
6. Play and play equipment
7. Family health
8. Family nutrition
9. Resolving conflicts
10. Family communication
11. Discipline
12. Consumer education for families
13. Extending the child's learning at home
14. Problem solving techniques
15. Values clarification
16. Sex education

A class might be structured around one area of concern for a particular group of parents, such as improving parent-child communications. In classes that are planned for a particular group of parents, such as single parents or parents of handicapped children, the same types of topics will be explored, but the particular problems of rearing children alone or handling the handicapped child will be emphasized.

Teachers in parent-child observation or parent-child participation classes face the two-fold challenge of developing one curriculum for the parent-child observation classes and another curriculum for the preschool program classes.

While parents benefit from the opportunity of observing their child in a play situation with other children, they will derive even greater benefit by observing and participating in a well planned educational program for preschool children. The teacher should also involve parents in planning the curriculum by using this as an opportunity to help parents understand the ways that children learn and the experiences that foster cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development.

The teacher in the preschool type of class also has the responsibility of modeling good guidance techniques for parents. Changes in behavior emerge as parents observe techniques that are effective, and the parents have an opportunity to try these techniques, discuss them, and choose those that fit their philosophy.

While some adult schools have developed a curriculum and course outline for parents and a curriculum for children, teachers must use such materials only as a guide. Effective teachers will develop a new curriculum each semester to meet the specific needs of a particular group of parents and children.

VIII. Working with Schools for Future Planning

The 1976 publication, *Partners in Education: Adult Education/Early Childhood Education Through Parent Education,* stressed the need for involving adult education programs in joint planning with early childhood education programs for parent education and parent involvement. Many adult schools since 1976 have provided parent discussion groups at elementary schools, training for parents as volunteer aides, parent participation classes for preschool children at the early childhood education school site, workshops on special topics, informational meetings, and classes for parents of exceptional children. Attempts have been made to provide for articulation of the early childhood program with preschool parent participation programs and child care programs in the community through joint meetings for preschool and elementary staff, through visits by preschool teachers to kindergarten classrooms, and through visits by kindergarten teachers to preschool programs. This type of cooperative venture has brought about a greater appreciation of adult education by the elementary school staff.

Schools involved in early childhood education have often found that the greatest barrier to parent participation in an elementary school is the lack of child care for preschool children. With this barrier in mind and with a concern for preschool education, some schools have established preschool parent-child participation classes at the school site, which required a minimum of parent involvement. In one district through adult education, a program was established which provides for a five-morning program for children. Each parent participates two days each week, and on the other three days the parent volunteers for work in an elementary classroom. This type of program is possible only when the adult school is willing to provide the service at a level of adult-student participation that just covers actual program costs, with the expectation that other programs already in existence will provide for indirect costs.

A new opportunity for increased cooperation between adult schools and elementary and secondary schools is available with the enactment of AB65, which provides for the establishment of site councils in schools that develop a school improvement plan. As more parents become involved in schools at all levels, adult schools can provide leadership training for parents who are not accustomed to working as committee members or in positions of responsibility in the site council. Site councils will also provide new means for assessing the needs of families in the school community, and adult schools can revise programs and implement new programs as these needs are identified.

The National Advisory Council on Adult Education has called for the establishment of neighborhood-based "Family Resource Delivery Systems." Adult schools are in a position to work cooperatively with all of the agencies in the community to make such programs available.

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Other Publications Available from the Department of Education

Establishing Parent Education Programs is one of approximately 400 publications that are available from the California State Department of Education. Some of the more recent publications or those most widely used are the following:

Administration of the School District Risk Management Program (1977)	$ 2.50
An Assessment of the Writing Performance of California High School Seniors (1977)	2.75
Attendance and Enrollment Accounting and Reporting (1977)	2.80
Bibliography of Instructional Materials for the Teaching of French (1977)	1.50
Bibliography of Instructional Materials for the Teaching of Portuguese (1976)	.85
Bicycle Rules of the Road in California (1977)	1.50
California Guide to Parent Participation in Driver Education (1978)	3.15
California Guide to Traffic Safety Education (1976)	3.50
California Master Plan for Special Education (1974)	1.00†
California Private School Directory, 1978	5.00
California Public School Directory, 1979	11.00
California Public Schools Selected Statistics, 1976-77 (1978)	1.00
California School Accounting Manual (1978)	1.65
California School Effectiveness Study (1977)	.85
California School Energy Concepts (1978)	.85
California School Lighting Design and Evaluation (1978)	.85
California Teachers Salaries and Salary Schedules, 1977-78 (1978)	10.00
Computers for Learning (1977)	1.25
Discussion Guide for the California School Improvement Program (1978)	1.50*†
District Master Plan for School Improvement (1978)	1.50*
District Paid Insurance Programs in California School Districts, 1977-78 (1978)	2.50
English Language Framework for California Public Schools (1976)	1.50
Establishing School Site Councils: The California School Improvement Program (1977)	1.50*†
Genetic Conditions: A Resource Book and Instructional Guide (1977)	1.30
Guidance Services in Adult Education (1979)	2.25
Guide for Multicultural Education: Content and Context (1977)	1.25
Guide for Ongoing Planning (1977)	1.10
Handbook for Assessing an Elementary School Program (1978)	1.50*
Handbook for Reporting and Using Test Results (1976)	8.50
Handbook on Adult Education in California (1979)	2.50
A Handbook Regarding the Privacy and Disclosure of Pupil Records (1978)	.85
Health Instruction Framework for California Public Schools (1978)	1.35
Hospitality Occupations Curriculum Guide (1977)	3.00
Liability Insurance in California Public Schools (1978)	2.00
Needs Assessment in Adult Education Programs (1978)	1.75
Physical Education for Children, Ages Four Through Nine (1978)	2.50
Planning Handbook (1978)	1.50*†
Publicizing Adult Education Programs (1978)	2.00
Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Integrated Educational Programs (1978)	2.60
Science Framework for California Public Schools (1978)	1.65
Site Management (1977)	1.50
Social Sciences Education Framework for California Public Schools (1975)	1.10
State Guidelines for School Athletic Programs (1978)	2.20
Students' Rights and Responsibilities Handbook (1978)	1.50*

Orders should be directed to:

California State Department of Education
P.O. Box 271
Sacramento, CA 95802

Remittance or purchase order must accompany order. Purchase orders without checks are accepted only from government agencies in California. Sales tax should be added to all orders from California purchasers.

A complete list of publications available from the Department may be obtained by writing to the address listed above.

†Also available in Spanish, at the price indicated.
*Developed for implementation of AB 65.

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